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S E C R E T MUSCAT 000279

SIPDIS

STATE FOR T, NP/RA, PM, NEA/RA, NEA/ARPI  
SECDEF FOR OUSD(P)

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TAGS: PARM PREL KNNP EWWT MASS MU

SUBJECT: PSI: TECHNICAL-LEVEL COOPERATION ON TRACK

REF: MUSCAT 232

Classified By: Ambassador Richard L. Baltimore III.

Reason: 1.4 (b, d).

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Summary  
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11. (S) A senior MFA official reiterated Oman's cooperation across the range of proliferation and border security activities, including a PSI-related air interdiction exercise later this month. He voiced the MFA's firm support for PSI, and his confidence that Oman's military and police were similarly on board. He pledged to work with the Embassy to seek further clarification of his government's February 9 note verbale. We are also coordinating with the British who believe it is more important to watch what the Omanis do rather than what they say. End summary.

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Cooperation Going Forward  
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12. (S) Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Organizations Department chief Ambassador Talib Miran al-Raisi received P/E Chief on short notice February 15 to discuss the Omani note verbale of February 9 (reftel) regarding the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Ambassador al-Raisi, MFA's top official on UN, international convention and legal regimes (and a key Embassy interlocutor on past agreements), emphasized at the outset of the meeting that Oman's robust technical-level cooperation with the USG on a range of proliferation and border security programs is going forward without interruption, including a planned PSI-related air interdiction exercise as part of the Accurate Test/Beacon Flash exercises beginning February 19.

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MFA, MOD and ROP on Board  
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13. (S) Ambassador al-Raisi agreed that the Omani note requires further clarification. He confided that his department had written a detailed brief, using clear and simple language, recommending the Sultanate's participation in the PSI. That brief received the approval of Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi, and was forwarded (per standard practice) to the Ministry of Legal Affairs on October 30, 2004, for clearance and onward transmission to the Council of Ministers. Ambassador al-Raisi said the MFA received the response as conveyed in its note to us on January 11, 2005 (reftel).

14. (S) Noting the active cooperation between the USG and the Sultanate's Armed Forces, the Royal Oman Police-Coast Guard, and civilian ministries on export control and border security, Ambassador al-Raisi was certain PSI had the support of those agencies. Ambassador Talib, who is departing shortly to attend OIC meetings in Jeddah for a week, underscored the MFA's support for PSI and pledged to work closely with the Embassy in bringing greater clarity to the government's position.

15. (S) The Ambassador subsequently discussed the Omani note with the UK Ambassador who received the same text and has been active in urging Oman's participation in PSI. The initial British interpretation is that it is more important to watch what the Omanis do rather than what they say. Nevertheless, both ambassadors agreed it would be better to obtain a clarification and will coordinate with each other to do so.

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Comment  
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16. (S) We have seen absolutely no change in the Omani government's complete commitment to bilateral activities with us across a range of border security and proliferation control programs. The Royal Oman Air Force's participation in a PSI-related event later this month, in fact, marks a watershed in the Sultanate's PSI engagement. We are hopeful

that the note verbale is nothing more than a poorly worded recommitment on Oman's part to quiet engagement on PSI, and will continue to work to refine that stance.

BALTIMORE